9
9: Thomas T-5 (1951-1955)1959
FX10 Bushmen FX10

also because, made of cloth instead of leather, it is more clinging, therefore warmer and more comfortable, and dries faster when wet. It is sought after and desired, it is got through employment; yet, even so, Bushmen hesitate to seek employment because they believe that they will be badly treated (as they sometimes are) and they often find the customary wage and food ration to be inadequate for anyone who must support a family. Supposedly, the wives of Bushmen laborers are free to look on the farmer's land for roots and berries, as they would if they were living in the veld; but, as it happens, after a few years the supply of wild food around a farm becomes exhausted.

The Bantu farmers, being as a rule much poorer than the European farmers, are less generous to their Bushman serfs. They also give a food ration of cornmeal and milk but almost never meat, for any meat that may come into the Bantu kraal is eaten by the Bantus unless it is the carcass of a hyena or a leopard which the Bantu masters have killed for the pelt. The Bantus say: "Our Bushman servants are like our children; they herd our cattle for us and we feed them. A child does not ask for wages when he helps with the family work."

Besides this, the Bantus badly cheat the Bushmen who come in from the veld to trade cured antelope hides for metal and tobacco, sometimes asking several hides, worth several pounds apiece, for enough tobacco to fill the palm of the Bushman's hand, or for a piece of wire long enough to make an arrowhead. All in all, it does not benefit the Bushmen to live anywhere near Bantu or European settlements, and that is why the Bushmen of the veld run and hide when they see Europeans coming, believing that they may be taken by force (as they sometimes are), and why they avoid going to a Bantu settlement except to trade for tobacco when they feel

9: Thomas T-5 (1951-1955)1959
FX10 Bushmen FX10

609 they must smoke, or when they are dying of thirst and must
648 come in to beg for water.

159 Once I talked with a young Bushman who had visited one
563 of our camps in Bechuanaland many times, who spoke Afri-
[191] kaans, and whom I shall call Tami. I could speak a little Afrikaans, so he and I could talk together. He was in his early thirties and had been working for some time for European farmers. When I met him he was married, and as his wife had
[145] just had a baby, he felt that his ten-shilling-a-month wage was inadequate and he planned to move to another part of the country where he hoped to be paid more. As it is rather unusual for a Bushman to uproot himself from his own country, no matter how long he has been on a farm and away from his own people, I asked him where he had come from and how he had learned Afrikaans.

[153] "Oh," he said, "I learned Afrikaans in the places I have
[191] been. I have worked for white men since I was a young boy and I have always been fast to learn their languages. In the same way I have learned the languages of the black people."

"Where did you live before you worked for white people?" I asked.

"We lived not far from Nurigaas, at the edge of the police zone. I am a young person still, but I remember that Nurigaas was all wild then. We always lived there."

"With your parents?"

"Yes, until the police boys [1] took the old man my father."

I asked him what had happened, and he said: "We lived at the edge of the police zone, you know. We lived with
888 other Bushmen there, and my sister, she was there. My
159 mother's father was still alive then, but he was too old, he
563 couldn't even carry water, and my mother had to do every-

[1] Police boys are native policemen, usually Bantu.

9: Thomas T-5 (1951-1955)1959
FX10 Bushmen FX10

that white people used to hunt Bushmen and wanted to kill us for our land. The farmer took me to his farm and I pulled weeds and watched his cattle. He gave me milk and corn-meal, but I didn't like it. I told him milk was for babies and I wanted him to take me back to my country, but he laughed at me.

"He called me Goliath because I was so small. Goliath, come here. Goliath, watch my calves. And later he gave me a shirt to cover my body and then I went to work for another master, who gave me a goat, and then I worked for my last master, who paid me shillings. But I am leaving here too because in South-West Africa they pay better. I am a father now, you know."

The day Tami left, I walked over the veld toward a road to say good-by to him, and when I got halfway there I found that he had come halfway to say good-by to me. He was holding his goat by the horns, and behind him his wife, wearing a horrid rag of a European dress, was standing with the baby inside the front of the dress. I gave Tami a knife and his wife a scarf of mine, although I had nothing to give to the baby, and they said good-by to me and turned, Tami dragging the goat around, pretending to be very jaunty, and they set out walking toward the road that leads to South-West Africa.

Times have changed since Tami's father died. In those days, to be sure, there was a great deal more friction between Bushmen and non-Bushmen than there is now because the Bushmen who lived near the farms of European or Bantu farmers quite often killed cattle. It is sometimes said that they did so because they were unable to distinguish between cattle and wild game, or that the cattle drove away the wild game so that the Bushmen would have had no meat if they had not killed the cattle, but I very much doubt that either of these things was true. Most probably, the Bushmen found

15: Marshall E-5 (1951-1961) 1965
FX10 Bushmen FX10
!Kung

drama, of releasing the emotions of the people and purging them, in the Aristotelian sense. Fear and hostility find an outlet and the people have acted together to protect themselves. In this there are support and solace and hope.

CHANGE

Today (1962) the pattern of life for the Nyae Nyae !Kung has begun to change radically. Many Bushmen of other language groups have had prolonged contact with the Bantu peoples among whom they live, and some have worked on Europeans' farms. Systematic studies of their social changes are lacking. The Nyae Nyae !Kung, as described here, had contact with Herero and Tswana neighbors in trade, but this contact did not appear to change the social structure of the independent !Kung. They are only now beginning to feel the impact of European contact. They were remote; they are no longer so. When, in 1951, we first worked our way to their area from the outposts of the farm lands, we were eight arduous days en route, in trackless, waterless country of bush and heavy sand, our four trucks heavy with water and petrol, equipment and supplies. Today a well-cleared track gives access in a day. Farmers began to come into the area to get the Bushmen to work for them and have their eyes upon the land.

The government of South West Africa, realizing the problem of the Bushmen, has appointed one of their most competent administrators of native affairs to be Bushman Affairs Commissioner, and is supplying him with funds and equipment. He and his wife are in the Nyae Nyae area and are working with several families of !Kung. He is leading one group of them into agriculture and this year they harvested a crop of corn. Others of the men are employed in road building and are being paid a cash wage, currently a shilling a day. It is too early to say what will happen to their social forms in so radical a change, which ones they will lose entirely, which they will retain and adapt to new conditions. All we know is that the !Kung who are taking part in the experiment have expressed themselves as willing and anxious to try to develop a new way of life.

NOTES

(1) Some of the ethnographic material used here has been previously published in my articles in *Africa* which are cited in the bibliography appended to this chapter. The ethnographic material is used with the permission of the International African Institute and the editor of *Africa*.

(2) Skeletal remains of Bushmen are found associated with late stone age implements in South Africa, but not with early or middle stone age (Schapera